



**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER**

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AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

March 9, 2005

TO: Supervisor Gloria Molina, Chair
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: J. Tyler McCauley 
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **EXCEL FAMILY INTERVENTION FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY
CONTRACT REVIEW**

We have completed a contract compliance review of Excel Family Intervention Foster Family Agency (Excel or Agency), a Foster Family Agency service provider. The review was conducted as part of the Auditor-Controller's Centralized Contract Monitoring Pilot Project.

Background

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) contracts with Excel, a private, non-profit, community-based organization to recruit, train, and certify foster care parents for the supervision of children placed in foster care by DCFS. Once Excel places a child, the agency is required to monitor the placement until the child is discharged from the program.

Excel is required to hire qualified social workers to provide case management and act as a liaison between DCFS and foster parents. Excel's headquarters is located in Los Angeles in the Second District. During our review, Excel had a total of 19 foster homes in which 32 DCFS children were placed.

DCFS pays Excel a negotiated monthly rate, per child placement, established by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Funding and Rate Bureau. Based on the child's age, Excel receives between \$1,589 and \$1,865 per month, per child. Out of these amounts, Excel pays the foster parents between \$624 and \$790 per month, per child. For Fiscal Year 2003-04, DCFS paid Excel approximately \$755,000.

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"

Purpose/Methodology

The purpose of the review was to determine whether Excel was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement and County contract. We also evaluated Excel's ability to achieve planned staffing levels. Our monitoring visit included verifying whether Excel received the appropriate reimbursement rate for each child and whether the certified foster parents received their portion of the reimbursement rate in a timely manner. We reviewed certified foster parent files, children's case files, personnel files, and interviewed Excel's staff, the children and the foster parents. Our review also included visits to a sample of certified foster homes to perform home inspections.

Results of Review

Generally, Excel provided the services identified in the County contract. The foster parents stated that the services that they received from Excel met their expectations and the children indicated that they enjoy living with their foster parents. Excel maintained the appropriate number of social workers and their caseloads did not exceed the maximum allowed by CDSS Title 22. Excel also ensured that foster homes were certified in compliance with the County contract and Title 22 facility regulations. In addition, Excel paid the foster parents their monthly payments in a timely manner.

In one of the seven special incident reports reviewed, the report did not indicate that the DCFS social worker or the Community Care Licensing social worker was informed of the incident as required by the County contract. In addition, Excel did not always complete the children's education and developmental progress reports in accordance with the County contract. For example, the Quarterly Progress Reports prepared by Excel for five children did not identify the children's progress towards reaching their short-term and long-range goals.

The details of our review, along with recommendations for corrective action, are attached.

Review of Report

On December 3, 2004, we discussed our report with Excel's management who agreed with the findings. In their attached response, Excel's management indicates the actions the agency has taken to implement the recommendations contained in the report. We also notified DCFS of the results of our review.

We thank Excel for their cooperation and assistance during this review. Please call me if you have any questions, or your staff may contact Don Chadwick at (626) 293-1102.

JTM:MMO:DC
Attachment

c: David E. Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer
Dr. David Sanders, Director, Department of Children and Family Services
Lillian Tennell, MS, Executive Director, Excel Foster Family Agency
Colleen Anderson, Community Care Licensing
Violet Varona-Lukens, Executive Officer
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

**CENTRALIZED CONTRACT MONITORING PILOT PROJECT
FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM
FISCAL YEAR 2004-2005
EXCEL FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY**

PROGRAM SERVICES

Objective

To determine whether Excel Family Intervention Agency (Excel or Agency) provided program services in accordance with their contract and California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Title 22 Regulations.

Verification

We visited two of the 19 Los Angeles County certified foster homes that Excel billed DCFS for in November and December 2003. We also interviewed two foster parents and the five children placed in the two homes. In addition, we reviewed and evaluated the Agency's monitoring activity, case files and Termination Reports for five children whose placement ended in November and December 2003.

Results

Excel provided the majority of services required by its County contract. Annually, Excel conducts a detailed assessment of each foster home to ensure all provisions of the County contract are followed. On a monthly basis Excel's social workers review each child's medical logs completed by the foster parents to ensure that the medical services provided to each child complies with the contract requirements. The two foster homes visited provided a clean, safe, and healthy environment. Excel made face-to-face contacts with placed children and their foster parents as required. The two foster parents interviewed were certified and had completed the required training.

However, various reports that Excel completed to track the development of the children were not completed in accordance with the County contract. Specifically:

Reporting Requirements

- The Quarterly Reports for the five children did not include the children's short-term and long-term goals along with the tasks for the children to complete to reach these goals, as required by the County contract.
- The Termination Reports for five children whose placements with a foster home ended in November and December 2003 did not assess the children's overall adjustment to the placement, educational and developmental progress, medical

and psychological history, or the children's goals and progress in achieving those goals, as required by the County contract.

- The Needs and Services Plans for the five children did not address the transportation plans for the children. The Needs and Service Plans for two children were missing goals for handling money, and the Needs and Service Plan for one child was missing grooming goals as required by the County contract.
- Placement packets for five children did not include the Foster Youth Bill of Rights, vocational and job training services available, life-skills training available, recreation opportunities provided, educational choices, school attendance requirements and clothing and weekly allowance requirements, as required by the County contract.

Miscellaneous Services

- For one of the seven incidents sampled, the case files did not indicate that Excel informed the DCFS or Community Care Licensing of the one incident as required by the County contract.
- For one of the two foster homes sampled, Excel did not conduct an assessment of the foster parent's ability to meet the needs of two or more children, prior to placing additional children in the home as required by the County contract. Subsequent to our review, Excel conducted an assessment of the foster home and determined that the home was able to meet the needs of more than two children.

Excel needs to ensure that quarterly reports, termination reports, needs and services plans and placement/orientation packets include all the information required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. In addition, Excel needs to ensure that the appropriate parties are informed of special incident reports as required by the County contract. Excel also needs to ensure that an assessment to evaluate the ability of the foster home to effectively care for more than two children is conducted prior to placing additional children in the home.

Recommendations

Excel management:

- 1. Ensure that Quarterly Reports, Termination Reports, placement/orientation packets and Needs and Services plans include all key information required by the County contract.**
- 2. Ensure that special incident reports are forwarded to the appropriate parties as required by the County contract.**

- 3. Ensure that staff conduct an assessment to evaluate a foster home's capability to provide quality care for more than two placements prior to placing additional children in the home.**

CLIENT VERIFICATION

Objective

To determine whether the program participants actually received the services that Excel billed to DCFS.

Verification

We interviewed five children placed in two certified foster homes to confirm the services Excel billed to DCFS.

Results

We interviewed all five children who stated that the services they receive from Excel meet their expectations and their assigned social worker visits them regularly.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS

Objective

Determine whether Excel's social workers' case loads do not exceed 15 placements and whether the supervising social worker supervises less than six social workers, as required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

Verification

We interviewed Excel's adoption program manager, supervising social worker, two social workers and three social worker interns and reviewed case load statistics and payroll records for November and December 2003.

Results

Excel's two social workers maintained an active caseload of approximately 11 children. The supervising social worker also supervised two social workers.

Recommendation

There are no recommendations for this section

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS**Objective**

Determine whether Excel's staff meet the education and work experience qualifications required by their County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. In addition, determine whether Excel conducted hiring clearances prior to hiring their staff and provided ongoing training to staff.

Verification

We interviewed Excel's program manager, supervising social worker, adoption program manager, two social workers and three social worker interns. In addition, we reviewed each staff's personnel file for documentation to confirm their education and work experience qualifications, hiring clearances and ongoing training.

Results

Excel's program manager, supervising social worker, adoption program manager and two social workers possess the required education (college degrees) and work experience required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. In addition, Excel appropriately conducted hiring clearances for staff assigned to the County contract.

However, Excel uses three social worker interns to perform all the same functions as a licensed social worker. However, the three staff do not possess the education and experience requirements required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. In addition, Excel did not receive a waiver from the Community Care Licensing to authorize the interns to perform these services.

Recommendation

4. **Excel management ensure that staff who perform the duties of a social worker possess the required education and work experience as required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations or obtain a waiver from Community Care Licensing permitting the use of staff who do not possess the required education and work experience.**



Excel Family Intervention Programs

the Fabric of Family

Adoption Agency (Lic# 197803423)
Foster Family Agency (Lic# 198201124)
Adoption Services
Adoptive & Foster Parents Support Services
Birth Parent Project
Sibling Groups
Teen MDM Placement
Drug Impacted Infants
Transitional Housing
Independent Living Program
Mental Health
Learning Center & Tutorial Program
Excel's Children Center

8616 La Tijera Blvd., Suite 412
Los Angeles, CA 90045
(310) 337-7053
Fax (310) 337-2780
Excelfam@pacbell.net
www.Excelfamilyintervention.org

Date: February 28, 2005

To: Supervisor Gloria Molena, Chair
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: Lillian Tennell, Executive Director

Subject: Excel Family Intervention Programs Foster Family Contract Review

We at Excel Family Intervention Programs have positioned ourselves in the community as a strong multi-service foster care and adoption agency. We value and welcome correction that will help us to improve and maintain our position of excellence.

With regards to the audit recommendations, we are in agreement with the findings and we have immediately implemented the following procedures and forms to correct the discrepancies noted in the audit.

Recommendations

1. With regards to quarterly reports, we have consistently provided quarter progress reports to DCFS Social Workers every 3 months. We have amended the report to include a separate section addressing long-range goals and objectives. We have also amended our Discharge Summary to include two new sections addressing children's adjustment to the placement and education and developmental progress. These items have historically been reported in the last quarterly. Medical and psychological histories are protected under the Health Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), information as to the last dates of each exam will be added to the discharge summary but actual medical and psychological information will remain in the medical and psychological section of the children's files. We have amended the Needs and Services report to include two new sections on transportation Plan and Plans for handling money, although the transportation plan is included in the agency agreement and is discussed at initial placement. There is a separate form used for handling children's cash resources found in the children's file, which is also

discussed at the time of placement. Excel has developed a Placement Orientation "Checklist" to ensure that each worker addresses the following items at the time of placement: Foster Youth Bill of Rights; Legal Rights of Teens; Educational Choices; Opportunities for Achievement; Vocational and Job Training; Life Skills Training; Recreational Activities; Religious, Spiritual/Ethical Development; Identification of Foster Care Social Worker; Clothing and Allowance; House Rules/Discipline Practices; Grievance and Complaint Procedures; School Attendance and Academic Expectations and Requirements; and, Discharge Procedures.

2. We have informed all social work staff in a staff meeting to document in detail whether a special incident warrants additional action. The report in question was sparse but did not require a report of suspected child abuse. An Investigation revealed that the DCFS worker was informed of the incident.
3. Excel has created a form that specifically addresses the issue of a foster parent's ability to meet the needs of more than two placements. It will also be addressed on the Foster Parent Evaluation form attached to the Discharge Summary/ Termination Report.
4. Excel administration will require each intern that does not possess the required education and work experiences to conduct home visits with a qualified partner worker except where a waiver has been approved by the state.

Excel has conducted an in-service training in which all staff were apprised of new forms and amendments.

It was a pleasure and working with the representative from your office your staff was quite professional, positive and receptive to addressing our concerns.

Any further questions or concerns can be addressed to me on 310-337-1946.

Sincerely,


Lillian Tennell, M.S.,
Executive Director